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July 25, 2006

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I regret the circumstances that today have prompted me to contact you and I am hopeful that, upon learning of these circumstances, you will investigate and respond.

In May, I was contacted by my constituent who expressed grave concerns with what he believed to be inadequate training provided by the United States Army to the 435 members (including his son) of the Wisconsin National Guard prior to their deployment to Iraq. My constituent wished to remain anonymous, but asked that I look into various allegations concerning the training provided to the 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery who were trained at Camp Shelby, MS. These allegations were as follows:

- During training sessions, Camp Shelby training instructors engaged in open argument among themselves regarding conflicting tactics;
 - Wisconsin Guardsmen were sent to the firing range without instruction in zeroing the sights of their weapons;
 - Camp Shelby possessed an inadequate number of HMMWVs to permit appropriate maneuver training;
 - Members of the 1st Battalion were trained artillerymen, not trained convey guards.
- Given the dissimilar missions, training should have reflected this.

In early June, I received the enclosed response to these allegations from COL Alfred P. Jones, Chief of Staff, HQ, First United States Army, Forest Park, GA. The response prompted further questions, specifically what would be done to rectify the admitted shortcomings in the Camp Shelby training. I shared this response from COL Jones with my constituent and then sent an additional inquiry to the Department of the Army just 10 days ago asking for specific remedies.

Sadly, today I learned that my constituent, Mr. Stephen L. Castner, no longer needs to remain anonymous because his son, Stephen W. Castner, was killed in Iraq after just having arrived within the last week.


In reviewing the information provided to me by Mr. Castner last May, his allegations were chillingly prophetic when he told me, "This is a request that you take urgent action to assure that

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the US Army provides our Wisconsin Guardsmen with training that rises to the level of the duty owed by this nation to its soldiers. The gravity of this matter is beyond words. My decision to send this letter is daunting." And this response from Mr. Castner after reviewing the response from COL Jones, "It is too late to improve the deficient training given to my son's regiment, but it is not too late for units yet to be trained."

In light of this tragic event, I am hopeful you will personally look into the training inadequacies outlined in this inquiry and respond accordingly.

Sincerely,



F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.,
Member of Congress

FJS:llh
Enclosure



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, FIRST UNITED STATES ARMY
4705 N. WHEELER DRIVE
FOREST PARK, GEORGIA 30297-5000

June 6, 2006

Office of the Chief of Staff

Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Representative in Congress
120 Bishops Way, #154
Brookfield, Wisconsin 53005

Dear Mr. Sensenbrenner:

This is in reply to your inquiry on behalf of an anonymous constituent concerning the training of members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard at Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

The concerns expressed by the anonymous constituent are addressed below:

a. During training sessions, Camp Shelby training instructors engaged in open argument among themselves regarding conflicting tactics: The trainers were wrong to argue about tactics, techniques, and procedures in front of the training unit. Seventy percent of the Observer Controller/Trainers are recent combat veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and care passionately about preparing Soldiers to survive and win in combat; however, that does not excuse their behavior.

b. Wisconsin Guardsmen were sent to the firing range without instruction in zeroing the sights of their weapons: Soldiers who have not been trained in how to zero the sights to their weapons are not sent to the range. This includes issuing the close combat optics sights which require a different procedure for zeroing than the sights affixed to the weapon. We test that process by firing the weapon in simulation prior to live fire. Also, we train how to zero again at the live fire zero range that every Soldier completes before moving on to qualification marksmanship. We will redouble our efforts to make sure we are connecting with every Soldier, however, the Soldier has an obligation to make known when he/she doesn't completely understand a required task. Additionally, every Soldier fires an average of 526 live rounds with their individual weapon before deploying. A Soldier who does not qualify with their assigned weapon will not deploy. We also conduct live fire training above qualification for every Soldier in reflexive fire techniques, close combat assault, squad, platoon, and company live fire, and live fire during military operations on urban terrain training.

c. Camp Shelby has inadequate number of HMMWVs to permit appropriate maneuver training: We have a total of 171 training HMMWVs provided by the National Guard and just concluded a major mission rehearsal for 1,500 Soldiers deploying to Afghanistan. To date, the 1-121st Field Artillery has been issued 50% of their request. They will have their total quota by June 21, 2006.

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d. Members of the 1st Battalion are trained artillerymen, not trained convoy guards. Because their missions are not similar, training should have reflected this: We know exactly how to train an artillery battalion to conduct convoy escort security missions as the 1-121st Field Artillery is the second artillery battalion of the nine total battalions we have trained in this mission. We execute a training plan that replicates down to the number of vehicles the unit will have to escort, in the configuration they will do so, and under the same conditions. Training is a building block strategy that begins with training squad level convoy escort security patrols, includes mounted live fire training, and culminates in a battalion seven day mission rehearsal exercise that stresses every combat, intelligence, and support system in the battalion.

I appreciate your support and personal interest in our Soldiers. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

for Vicki L. Quinn, Ph.D.
Alfred P. Jones
Colonel, U.S. Army
Chief of Staff